

Here's the Latest Look at the Bloomingdale Trail [PHOTOS]

By [Alisa Hauser](#) on March 9, 2015 6:56pm

BUCKTOWN — Landscape and design architects donned hard hats to walk on the under-construction [Bloomingdale Trail](#) Monday.

Set to open in June, the elevated 2.7-mile-long biking, jogging and walking path begins in Bucktown and Wicker Park to the east and extends west to Logan Square and Humboldt Park.



Built along a former railroad line, the path — elevated between 16-to-18 feet at various points — is ADA accessible, with several ramps to get on and off.

Jamie Simone, Program Director of The Trust for Public Land's Urban Parks Program, led a tour of one stretch of the path alongside Churchill Park, 1825 N. Damen Ave.

The park is one of six ground-level neighborhood parks that will link up to the path, which is named for Bloomingdale Avenue, the street the path runs along between Ridgeway and Ashland avenues.

The Bloomingdale Trail will serve as the centerpiece to a larger system that organizers [have dubbed "The 606"](#) due to the first three numerals of the zip code all Chicago residents share.

Some 45 graduate students, all studying landscape design or architecture at the University of Pennsylvania or the University of Illinois at Chicago, were on the tour accompanied by their professors, Christopher Marcinkoski and Andrew Moddrell, who own [the urban design consulting firm, Port.](#)

The Trust for Public Land is helping to lead the project, a public and private partnership between the city, the Chicago Park District and the Trust, Simone explained in a presentation at Goddess and Grocer, 1615 N. Damen Ave., before the tour.

"This project is unique; it never had any organized opposition. There have been some individual concerns over privacy [\[from folks who live along the trail\]](#) that we continue to address but the fact there was no major opposition speaks to the strength of the communities along the trail," Simone said.

The majority of the \$95 million needed to build the trail came in the form of \$50 million worth of [federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality](#) grants, Simone said. Some \$74 million has been raised, organizers said.

"It is considered a commuter route," Simone said, further elaborating that only \$2 million of the trail's estimated cost was paid for by the city. The rest was raised through private fundraising efforts.



Construction on the trail began 18 months ago [following a June 2013 groundbreaking ceremony](#) featuring Mayor Rahm Emanuel, whom Simone credited for pushing the long-anticipated project onto a faster timeline.

"The design phase for the trail started when former Mayor [Richard M.] Daley decided he was not going to run again. All of the candidates said they would support the trail. Part of the reason this was accelerated was because Emanuel wanted to get it done on a quicker timeline," Simone said.



The trail crosses over 38 overpass bridges and has 12 access points — about every quarter mile, marked onto the pavement:



When the trail opens, four of the 12 access points will be through ground-level parks: [Walsh Park](#), 1722 N. Ashland Ave.; [Churchill Park](#), 1825 N. Damen Ave.; [Julia de Burgos Park](#), 1805 N. Albany Ave.; and [Park 567, 1805 N. Milwaukee Ave.](#)

A fifth park, at 1801 N. Kimball Ave.; and a sixth park, spanning nearly one city block on the site of a former glove factory along Ridgeway Avenue in Humboldt Park, will be completed in a later part of the project.

Simone, talking with a student:



The trail's concrete path is 10-feet wide, flanked by two-foot-wide "soft shoulders," comprised of a rubberized surface intended for joggers.

The trail will feature 1,400 newly planted trees, such as oak and birches, and will showcase 200 species of plants, like service berries, lilacs and forsythia.

New trees:



Home owners living along the trail were given an option of having a short or tall privacy fence.

A 4.5-foot-tall privacy fence, along a Bucktown condo building:



A 10-foot-tall privacy fence, along a home near Churchill Park:



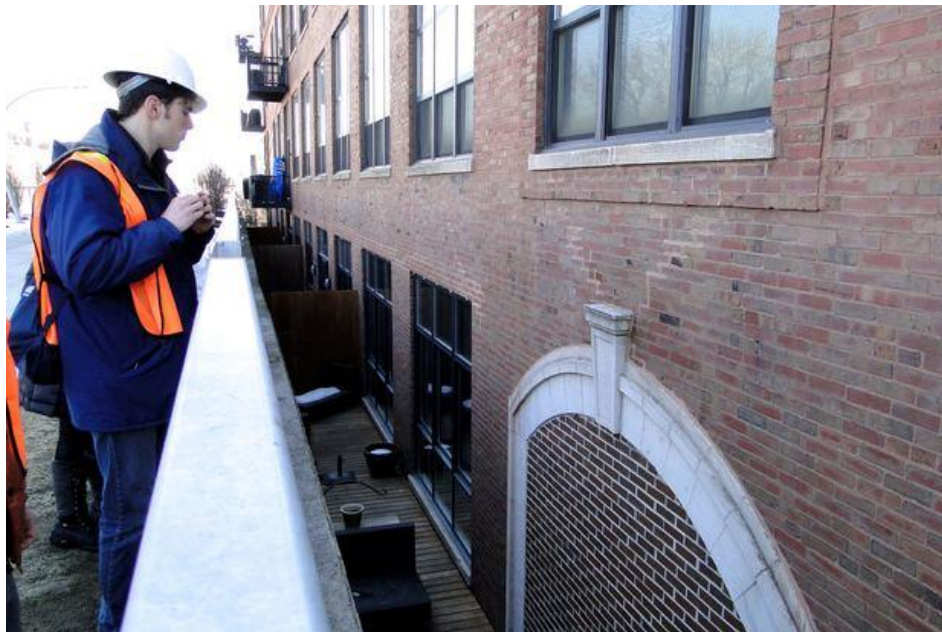
Simone said that the trail organizers are going to work with street artists, likely a combination of local and international talent, to commission art along the embankment walls, in part to discourage graffiti taggers.

"What we've observed is that tagging goes down when there is work by respected artists up. With the trail being nearly three miles long, we will have six miles of wall space," Simone said.

After the tour, Steven Kruger, a student at UIC, said he enjoyed learning about the plantings along the trail.

"I like the fact it is not just one spot but a movable park that runs through the city. It has a connective element," Kruger said.

Kruger looks at homes along the trail:



Adrian Cortinas, a student at the University of Pennsylvania, said that the stop in Bucktown was the last on a three-day tour ending Monday. At Goose Island, the students "speculated on a vision for the future of the area as a high tech, manufacturing hub," Cortinas said.

"I really liked going on this trail. We have heard the High Line [in New York City] comparison but the High Line feels more commercial, more tourist-y. This is not open yet but I hope it will not become like that, this feels more neighborhood friendly," Cortinas said.

The park hours will be 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. The 606's six ground-level parks and six access points to the trail will be monitored by the Chicago Police Department's Shakespeare District, Simone said.

For more information, visit The606.org or follow the park's progress on Facebook or Twitter, [@The606Chicago](https://twitter.com/The606Chicago).

Cortinas:



